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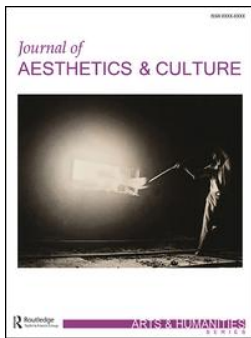
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ESSAY



“Kiss me with the hollow of your mouth” – imagining falling in love with Stense Andrea Lind-Valdan

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ABSTRACT

The essay reflects upon the function of images within the love encounter, drawing on the personal experience of the author and his partner, visual artist Stense Andrea Lind-Valdan. Mixing personal experiences, diaristic notes and academic reflections, the essay moves beyond conventional scholarly style and experiments with more personal and anecdotal modalities, thus creating a text that re-enacts the fascination and imaginary entrapments involved in the love encounter while simultaneously reflecting upon these aspects of love.

KEYWORDS

Love; art; art history; images; creative writing

“No love is original,” writes Roland Barthes in his book *A Lover’s Discourse*. “The loved one is desired because another or others have shown the subject that such a being is desirable: however particular, amorous desire is discovered by induction,” Barthes claims.¹ He even explicates this with a reference to mass culture, which seems of pertinence in a contemporary context where algorithms increasingly influence or even determine our choices: “Mass culture is a machine for showing desire: here is what must interest you, it says, as if it guessed that men are incapable of finding what to desire by themselves.”² In this sense—if Barthes is correct—amorous love is pre-shaped as a cultural ideal before it is experienced as a personal affect. Or perhaps the “love archive” of the individual is always somehow extracted from “love’s archives”, which is where the normative regulation of love is given shape. This is what we evidence in an exaggerated form in today’s digital dating services and social media, where complex calculations and algorithms so explicitly help to determine what the object of our desires should be. An old paradox resides deep in this, a paradox which Octavio Paz has concisely formulated in his description of the universal myths about amatory encounters between two persons: “Their encounter requires [...] two contradictory conditions: the attraction that the lovers experience must be involuntary, born of a secret and all-powerful magnetism; at the same time, it must be a choice. In love, predestination and choice, objective and subjective, fate and freedom intersect.”³ If one wants to be more historically and culturally specific, one could turn to Denis de Rougemont, who in his classical study on *Love in the Western World* writes about the development of the Romance of Tristan and Isolde into a

literary genre and remarks that “Our least calculated actions are sometimes the most effective. A stone which we throw “without aiming” hits the mark. [...] There would be no myth and no romance if Tristan and Iseult were able to say what is the end they are making ready for in the depths—indeed in the abyss—of their wills.”⁴

I received a dare from Andrea in 2013. In an email she encouraged me to be courageous. I answered her encouragement with a demand, the rudimentary sentence: “I want you”. The desire that replaces the need in such demand, is it of a different quality than love? Or, does not the very idea of a *want* go into the contemporary version of romantic love? It is a love based upon a critical *want* and a demand. “I want you”. Is the one you want also always the one you cannot be critical of? Or, could wanting somebody be a strategy of criticality? The distance intrinsic to criticism is obviously being broken down when desirous love is involved. The demand “I want you” asks deliberately for this distance to be overcome, be broken down. Thus, unlike “I love you”, which promises another kind of possessiveness, both milder and more aggressive. “I want you” is a request, which is strong and weak, self-confident and unsure of itself. It is a request that does not confirm the subject, but delivers it. Is a position where a loving engagement becomes a critical understanding imaginable? In her recent book Jane Blocker admits to something akin to this: “I follow them [the artists], watch them work, and see myself implicated in their methods, not because I believe they have all the answers to the questions of history’s impossibility [...] and certainly not because I believe they are somehow immune to the errors and bias that plague history more generally, but because

their work allows me to think creatively about my own practice, to embrace impossibility as potentially generative.”⁵ Blocker advocates “implication” with living artists. I find the idea of “radical implication” interesting, even if it by no means comes without its own set of inherent problems. Sometimes I even wonder what the limits to my self are. Can these limits be drawn? What does the notion of “autonomy”, so important to critical theory, mean in the light of deliberate “implication”? Being “folded in,” as the Latin *implicatus* means, points to the processual and intricate nature of acquiring in-depth knowledge about the work of someone else. Knowing the work intimately, in the flesh, as it were, is a radical implication that adds complication to the relation, “a folding-together or embrace,” as suggested by Young Dou (Michael) Kim.⁶ Are we not all in this sense, and particularly art historians and visual artists, in complicated ways engaged with images, the imaginary and imagination to an extent that precludes autonomy? Are we not into images? Searching endlessly within the images as well as absorbed by them, consumed by them.

A late afternoon in March 2015 Andrea and I visited one of the most beautiful art collections in Rome, the Palazzo Altemps. We had been out and about all day, searching for monuments and fountains. The quiet and tranquil atmosphere of the spaces in the palazzo was a distinct contrast to the noisy and crowded chaos of the Roman streets right outside the building. Very few people had found their way to the collection this day. We had it to ourselves. We saw the collection together, stood before the incredible sculptures, discussed what was in front of us. We stayed before the Ludovisi Throne for quite a while. It is believed that the work is from about 460 BCE, although it is discussed whether the work may be younger (it was found in 1887 in the grounds of Villa Ludovisi). Its main panel allegedly shows Venus rising from the sea, assisted by two robed women. It is an intriguing image, slightly fragmented, chiselled in marble, bas-relief, but strangely airy and ephemeral nonetheless. The two women, their heads missing from the stone, are lifting Venus from the water. They simultaneously hold a piece of garment in front of Venus to hide her lower body and her private parts. Her upper body is visible through the wet robe sticking tightly to her skin; her wide-set round breasts are pulled apart by her uplifted arms. Her head is turned sideways, making a perfect profile of her raised face. Her eyes appear to be closed, while she nonetheless turns her head in an upwards-looking direction. In a way she is like a newborn child with the fully shaped body of a grown woman. She is child and woman in one, a curious prevision of the *femme-enfant* of the surrealists. Child and woman, seeing and blind, newborn and drowned, alive and dead.

All of these incompatible states—along with the contrast of the hard marble and the soft garment represented—seem to inhabit the figure, making her essentially enigmatic and fascinating. We stayed in front of this strange image for a long time and afterwards the image stayed with us.

Later, in the Villa d’Este, Andrea filled a bottle with water from the fountain of Venus in the courtyard and brought it with her back to our apartment in Rome. This fountain, made by Pirro Ligorio—the main architect behind the fountains in Villa d’Este—in 1572, is the initial fountain in the huge and complex system of spectacular fountains in the Villa d’Este. All the water coming from the Rivellesse spring passes through this fountain, through Venus as it were, before moving on to the lower fountains in the hanging garden of Villa d’Este. In secret Andrea carefully secured the water, the Venus water, in a small bottle. She wanted to use it later for watercolours. It is love water. She wants to paint with the love water, make art from love. Love images, images infused with the secretions of desire and passion.

The fountain from which many of our considerations spring, however, is a different one, a modern one, and a subversive one. Known as one of the most iconic works of scandal in the twentieth century, Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* from 1917 is not a simplistic work, but one filled with paradoxes and ironies. For example, it is not exactly a fountain such as the title suggests. It only indirectly refers to a fountain through its prosaic function as a urinal, thus pointing towards the act of “passing water” or relieving oneself as an analogue to the jets of water in fountains. Hence the “scandalous” and “immoral” aspects of the work, which also explain why it was never exhibited but only survived through the publication of a photograph of it (by Alfred Stieglitz) and a narration of its fate in the magazine *The Blind Man*. Another paradoxical artwork, both iconic and unseen, original and copy, innocent and scandalous, mundane and spectacular, ordinary and extraordinary. The influence of this work along with Duchamp’s other ready-mades on The Twentieth Century art history is immense, having informed among other things conceptual art in the 1960s. Duchamp is—in a term introduced by Mira Schor—a “mega-father”, within the patrilineage of art history, and Bruce Nauman who made his appropriation of Duchamp’s *Fountain* by posing in a photographic self-portrait with a jet of water shooting from his mouth, forming a perfect arch (*Self-Portrait as Fountain*, 1967) could count as a mega-son within the same patrilineage.⁷ The patrilineage is the dominant legitimating factor within formations of canons in art history: “...legitimation is established through the father”, as Schor notes.⁸ Viewed within this perspective *Fountain* becomes an intricate source, one that needs to be

considered as much more than anti-art and playful iconoclasm. Significantly, Mira Schor's critique of Duchamp and his patrilineage is made in a book entitled *Wet*, in which she particularly stresses the marginalization of painting and all its juicy messiness in favour of "dry" idea based art since the 1960s. Duchamp's *Fountain* as a mega-product of the mega-father may be a dry one, although it is in a sense full of the very seed that secures the offspring and the patrilineage. Duchamp's *Fountain* is dry but seminal, it overflows with meanings but they remain abstract ideas, although "immoral" ones.⁹ Duchamp, thus, is a mega-father that we cannot help having daddy issues with. *Fountain* is a mega-work that we must somehow engage with and distance ourselves from.

Andrea proposes the idea of her body as an aqueduct, literally a body conveying water, and a body of passing water, which can be symbolised by the bridge pose. She has already made an uninvited performance in front of Henry Moore's *Two Piece Reclining Figure No. 5* (1963–64) at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in the summer of 2014. Her sister photographed her as she entered into the bridge pose in front of the sculpture. Now in Rome we continue these playful and uninvited interventions. One morning we walk the short distance from Accademia di Danimarca, where we stay, to the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna. Here Andrea turns herself into an aqueduct in front of Moore's *Reclining Figure: External Form* (1953–54) while I photograph her. There are hardly any visitors this morning. Her posture suggests aqueduct while simultaneously offering to double Moore's abstracted female figure and supplement it with the presence of the physical body of a woman. The strange hollowness and distorted bodily shape of the sculpture is also echoed by Andrea's bridge pose that in a similar way places the body in a suspended and contorted dialogue with the surrounding space. Quite different from Moore's sculpture, however, she is no longer the female figure imagined and represented by a male artist. She offers an alternative vision of the "reclining figure", one that is watery and liquid, yet solid, an aqueduct.

The Greek antecedent of Venus, Aphrodite, was born out of the foamy sea, the myth tells us. This foamy sea was made up of the blood and semen from the testicles of the sky-god Uranus when he was castrated by his own son, Cronus (Saturn), for sleeping with Gaia. The love goddess was born out of this trauma, her eloquent ways of managing desires thus a product of the bloodied sea of a vengeful father killing. It is not surprising, then, that love never really seems a wholly pleasurable affair, but ambivalent and often containing its share of rupture, vengeance, aggression, pain and trauma. Andrea carries a bottle full of the waters of Venus with her from the town of

Tivoli to Rome and later back to Copenhagen, where the bottle remains intact and unused, an elixir with mixed and unknown contents that should be treated carefully. We notice that high above the Venus fountain, above the cornice, the head of Emperor Constantine sits. That great emperor who is among other things renowned for having had his own son, Crispus, executed—in an inverted father killing—on suspicion of adultery.

Andrea has worked with body fluids before. She has employed her body to incorporate and expel paint and she has used her bodily fluids as paints. She has employed her own secretions, the cyclic fluids of life, to make images. In a series of eight drawings entitled *Bleedproof* from November 2013 she used menstrual blood to create abstract images on bleed proof paper. For days Andrea collected her menstrual blood in a small bowl that she kept in our fridge before finally pouring it onto the eight sheets of paper, leaving them to dry in the windowsill. "Collaboration is erotic," she has written in hand on image number six in the series. The menstrual blood is not pure, but in places holds traces of semen too. She posted all the images on her blog, *youshouldpopstuff*, and provided a link from the images to a poem called "Menstruation at Forty" (1966) by so-called confessional poet Anne Sexton. When still alive, Sexton was attacked by mostly male critics who did not appreciate her transgressions of "the socially sanctioned limits prescribed for women in the postwar era," as Paula M. Salvio has formulated it.¹⁰ In 1963 critic James Dickey, for instance, criticized Sexton for "dwelling [...] insistently on the pathetic and disgusting aspects of bodily experience, as though this made the writing more real."¹¹ The wish for realism ascribed to Sexton, while it is at the same time being condemned, is here explicitly associated with the body. But does the use of the reality of bodily experiences in art necessarily imply a claim for realism? Looking at Andrea's *Bleedproof* drawings I sense no such claim. The images are completely abstract and they do not in themselves reveal the material of which they are composed. They are paintings made out of the red fluids from (in Sexton's words) that "warm room, the place of the blood" inside the body of Andrea, but the final works are blots and splotches of dark red, almost black colour on white paper. Far from "disgusting aspects of bodily experience" they are traces of passion, evidence of infertility and quite literally the marks of a sea of blood and semen, "blood worn like a corsage to bloom," voluptuous and rich colour splotches witnessing the unborn child, the impossible, never acquired child.

The first few lines of "The Richard Mutt Case", an anonymous text about Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* appearing in the second volume of the magazine *The Blind Man* in April 1917, reads like this: "They say any artist paying six dollars may exhibit. Mr. Richard

Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion this article disappeared and never was exhibited. What were the grounds for refusing Mr. Mutt's fountain: —1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar. 2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing. Now Mr. Mutt's fountain is not immoral, that is absurd, no more than a bath tub is immoral. It is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers' show windows. Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He chose it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object. As for plumbing, that is absurd. The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges.”¹² The anonymous writer here formulates a condensed program for the historical avant-garde of the early twentieth century, pointing both to art's connections to mundane life and to its potentials for creative imagination. The title of the magazine in which the piece was printed, *The Blind Man*, of course referred to the unwillingness of not only the wider public, but even more so of the inner circles of the art world, to see and to recognize new art, to which the fate of *Fountain* attested so evidently. The blind man, however, refers to the artist as well. In his concise text on “The Creative Act” (1957), Marcel Duchamp described the artist as a medium, who—contrary to much theory about the conceptual art to which Duchamp is often appointed predecessor—does not have a consciousness of what he does: “All his decisions in the artistic execution of the work rest with pure intuition and cannot be translated into self-analysis, spoken or written, or even thought out.”¹³ Finally, the blind man is also Oedipus of the Greek myth, who spent his entire life “blind” to his own identity and ended up literally blinding himself upon recognizing that he had killed his own father and slept with his own mother.¹⁴

Am I the blind man? To an art historian it is part of the profession to look and to think about looking, and with this profession the complexities and challenges of different blindnesses become all the more visible and evident. I find myself looking at Andrea's images as part of my profession. Before we meet, I know her through her images. I not only look at them, I find myself drawn to them in a way I rarely experience. What is the attraction, the fascination, of these images? If it is a fascination I experience before them, am I not exactly at the risk of being “blinded” by them? The Latin meaning of *fascinare* is “to put under a spell” or “to bewitch”. Am I even allowed to speak (as a professional art historian) if I am under a spell? Or does it disqualify me that I am now “blinded” by her images? To be honest, these questions only arise retrospectively. I am thinking back on looking at Andrea's images when we did not yet

know each other, had not yet met. In this act of memorization I draw up the picture of myself before the computer screen, simply looking at her images as I would look at so many other artworks and images by contemporary artists in galleries, museums and on websites. After all I am an art historian specializing in contemporary art. I looked at Andrea's images on her blog, which contains documentations of works on paper, photographs, videos and written pieces in a labyrinthine arrangement partly reminiscent of a multi-media diary. Every now and then she would announce a new work on her blog via an update on Facebook and I would have a look at the blog again.

We travelled to Rome together in March 2015 to work on the project that we gave the working title *Fountain*. What city could be more appropriate than Rome for this project? Its hundreds of public fountains almost seem to be an ordering principle of the city. Its abundance of art history and its historical status as the destination of any *Bildungsreise* or Grand Tour makes it an obvious if somewhat anachronistic place to go. We stayed at the Accademia di Danimarca for a month. One of the books I read while in Rome was Wilhelm Jensen's novel *Gradiva* from 1902 and Sigmund Freud's famous analysis of the essay entitled *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's "Gradiva"* from 1907. Jensen's novel is about a young German archaeologist who is in Pompeii. He falls in love with an image, a bas-relief of a young woman who he gives the name of Gradiva, which means “she who walks forward”. The bas-relief shows her in profile, walking, her one foot on the ground, the other elegantly raised in an almost vertical position. The young archaeologist dreams that the woman fell victim to the eruption of Vesuvius in 79, forever trapped in the lava as an unchanging imprint of movement. Her image is unlike any other, as if “fixed [...] in a clay model quickly, from life, as she passed on the street,” as it says in Jensen's description. He continues: “So the young woman was fascinating, not at all because of plastic beauty of form, but because she possessed something rare in antique sculpture, a realistic, simple, maidenly grace which gave the impression of imparting life to the relief.”¹⁵ One hot summer day at the site of the excavations of Pompeii the young archaeologist believes that the young woman comes alive before him, only to slowly discover that she is not Gradiva but a real woman and an old playmate from his childhood with whom he now falls in love. The story is a romantic variation of the Ovidian story about Pygmalion and the female sculpture come alive, a sort of metamorphosis which Jensen repeatedly used as a motive in his novels.¹⁶ As Freud recounts, it is a story about “a young archaeologist who had given up interest in life, for that in the remains of the classic past, and now, by a remarkable

but absolutely correct *détour*, was brought back to life.”¹⁷ To Freud it is a story that perfectly and poetically illustrates his theory on repression and serves to legitimate the metaphor of archaeology in relation to the practice of psychoanalysis: “There is no better analogy for repression, which at the same time makes inaccessible and conserves something psychic, than the burial which was the fate of Pompeii, and from which the city was able to arise again through the work with the spade.”¹⁸ Freud, himself passionately interested in Italian art history, was so absorbed in the story of *Gradiwa* that he acquired a plaster copy of the bas-relief, which was the one non-fictional element that Jensen integrated into his novel. Just like the protagonist of Jensen’s novel, Freud thus became the owner of a plaster copy of the relief which hung in his office at Berggasse in Vienna. The original bas-relief, however, is at the Vatican Museum in Rome. We set out to find it one day and located it in an empty corridor, high up among other fragments of reliefs. It did not seem like much. The impression that lasts from the visit is not so much the bas-relief as Andrea’s deep anxiety of entering this papal Rome, the Vatican City. To our disappointment the two fountains at Saint Peter’s Square were not functioning on that day. The only water we happened to find was a *fontanella*, a small fountain with free flowing water. We made a photograph of Andrea where a simple optical illusion makes it look as if the water flows not from the tap of the *fontanella* but from her wide-open mouth. Momentarily she becomes the source, playfully challenging the papa-authority of Saint Peter’s Square, the prime site of the religious mega-father.

On 7 November 2012 Andrea made a new entry to her blog. She posted six tongue drawings made on single logarithm paper, some in green ink, some in red ink. They were evidently a continuation of the explorations undertaken in an earlier, performative work, *Kys al mit (alkymist)* from July, only now transposed from the performance of the live body to its imprints, its traces on paper. The six drawings show the imprints of the tongue as it has moved on the surface of the paper while soaked in paint. The six drawings show the traces of the act of licking the paper. However, they are not only abstract imprints of movements of the tongue, they also vaguely resemble the tongue. They are indexical and iconic at the same time, imprints and signs. The tongue drawings are performative works in the sense that they refer back to the act that has produced them, but also in the sense that they actively perform and enact a certain eroticism as images. They speak about the impossibility of measuring the body and its sensual capacities, the impossibility of measuring voluptuous bodily sensations. They confront the mathematical rationale inherent in the paper with the excessive unruliness of the body. They are playful, lavish, and

unabashed colourful, mocking the idea of a rational representation of the body, mocking even the idea of a rational self-representation of the body. They mute any expectation of ordered, coherent speech, offering instead the rhythmic mumblings, foldings and pushes of a tongue engaged in exploring the world through touch, not speaking it through language. They silence until wordlessness and call forth other experiences, inner experiences, and embodied sensations.

On 11 January 2013 I bought the six tongue drawings from Andrea. This was the first time we met face to face. We met in her studio, at her home. We looked at her works and spoke for an hour. On 6 April we met again, this time at my home. In exchange for some of my books Andrea gave me a breast imprint in green ink on grid paper. I had it framed and hung it on the wall above my desk in my office. On 24 April I wrote an email to Andrea as I sat at my desk looking at her work: “I am looking at the grid that confines the imprint of you, of your breast. It looks like a map of a remote solar system or a swarm of meteorites around an imploded black hole. Or a delicate cave painting laboriously removed from its original site by a conservationist and transferred onto paper to be preserved for eternity. But I think it’s you right there. Your imprint. Your image. It breathes.” As if the imprint were a Rorschach image I associated freely, only arriving at the fact that it is an imprint of Andrea’s breast as a final, clear-sighted conclusion after the exhilarating listing of possible other interpretations. Is it me or is it the image? Am I the blind man or does the image provoke such associations? W.J.T. Mitchell has claimed that a “magical view” of images is not reserved for so-called primitive cultures but “is fundamental to the ontology of images as such, or to a form of life we might call ‘being with images.’”¹⁹ In such circumstances, when we let ourselves “be with images”—or are put under their spell—we experience the image as “an animated, living thing, an object with feelings, intentions, desires, and agency.”²⁰ Such images evoke different feelings, provoke different reactions, and are often experienced as offensive and thus incite iconoclasm. Because of their “magical” capacities, their potentials of acquiring agency, becoming “alive”, images can fill us with fear as David Freedberg has noted: “Perhaps one of the most extraordinary things about Ovid’s *Pygmalion* narrative is that its very structure adumbrates two of the deepest fears that converge in the mistrust of the senses: in the first place the fear of the real body; and in the second that of making an image come alive.”²¹ The real body and the image come alive are the two things I see when I look at Andrea’s tongue drawings and breast imprints.

The real body and the image come alive. I think about these two fears. I think about art history and

my own way into that discipline, my “career”, and my professional life. In a way the enigma at the core of it remains the same, I am drawn towards the questions about the real body and the image come alive, the osmosis of fantasy and images and what we designate as real. Most of what I have written as an art historian concentrates on those questions. Nevertheless, the fact that I am myself a real body, the fact that the art historian himself or herself is a real body, is something I have mostly shied away from thinking about and writing about. It is something most art historians shy away from thinking about and writing about. Even when Mitchell in his weighty book on the agency of images with authority remarks that the question is not so much “what it is about images that gives them such remarkable power to offend people,” but rather “what it is about people that makes them so susceptible to being offended by images,” he does not take the step from this generalized notion of “people” to the specific and particular individual closest at hand, himself.²² He does not ask what moves him in images. It can hardly come as a surprise that art historians take an interest in images or even feel something akin to an obsession about images. The practice of the art historian does not involve reflections on his or her own embodied vision. On the contrary, most methods within the discipline carefully erase all evidence of the art historian as a physical being and strive for objectivity, the “neutral” position, resulting in the “beautiful, dry and distant texts” that James Elkins has written extensively about.²³ I look at Andrea’s images and I feel drawn in. It is not delusion, not hallucination. I do not remain within the domain of the imaginary. It is desire and it connects my mind and my body in a completely new way; it directs me towards her, it directs me towards thinking about desirous images. I look at the tongue drawings and I feel drawn in and I remember Sappho’s words as spoken by Jeannette Winterson: “Kiss me with the hollow of your mouth, the excavation where the words are dug, the words sanded under time. Kiss me with the hollow of your mouth and I shall speak in tongues.”²⁴

I began to write an article about Andrea’s tongue drawings in April 2013 when I was invited to contribute to the Danish journal *Kritik*. They were planning a special issue on sexuality and I proposed to write about Andrea’s tongue drawings. I wrote about the six drawings that I had acquired from Andrea earlier that year, which gave me an excuse for looking at them every day, thinking about them every day. The article was finished in the fall of 2013 and published in early December the same year. One of Andrea’s tongue drawings adorned the cover of the journal, which had a mixed reception. My contribution was in all respects except one a quite ordinary art historical analysis and discussion about the work of a

young, female artist. The exception was to be found in a footnote. Footnote number 1 explains: “This article was started in early spring of 2013 with a love for the art of Andrea Lind-Valdan and finished in the early fall of 2013 with a more complete and deep love for Andrea Lind-Valdan as an artist and a human being. In other words, the article has been written in a kind of blind devotion that is not unlike the strategic disposal of critical distance that I attribute to the mentioned works by Lind-Valdan.”²⁵ It is perhaps the most commented on footnote that I have written.

Concluding the article on Andrea’s tongue drawings I stated that “the tongue drawings conjure us to silence via their elaborations of the body’s exuberant and obscure sign production through touch, through caress, through kisses. They tear us away from the spatial depths of a scenic space and instead give us the plane and the imprint, a mute temporality which is closer to the circular time of the myth than the chatter of chronological time, closer to the skin’s blind membrane of impressions (touch) than the eye’s dreaming and longing insight (the gaze).”²⁶ I have later found that my descriptions of the indexical and substantial qualities of the tongue drawings correspond to Octavio Paz’s description of the erotic encounter itself: “An erotic encounter begins with the sight of the desired body. Whether clothed or naked, the body is a presence: a form that for an instant is every form in the world. The moment we embrace that form, we cease to perceive it as a presence and grasp it as concrete, palpable matter, matter that fits within our arms and is nonetheless unlimited.”²⁷ While the tongue drawings might generate a visual analogue to the erotic encounter, I am also aware of the trap of this blindness. It might simply designate my ignorance of my own engagement—in all the senses of the word—with the subject of my analysis. I come to think of what Roland Barthes writes about the uncertainty of signs for the lover: “The power of the image-repertoire is immediate: I do not look for the image, it comes to me, all of a sudden.”²⁸ After which he moves on to state that “A man who wants the truth is never answered save in strong colored images, which nonetheless turn ambiguous, indecisive, once he tries to transform them into signs: as in any manticism, the consulting lover must make his own truth.”²⁹ Perhaps I am making everything up?

Notes

1. Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 136.
2. Ibid., 136–37.
3. Paz, *The Double Flame*, 27.
4. De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 48.
5. Blocker, *Becoming Past*, 24.
6. Dou (Michael) Kim: “Love at the Limit of Phenomenology,” 73.

7. Schor, *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture*, 99.
8. Ibid.
9. The seminal became a fluid (i.e. *semen*) in Duchamp's *Paysage Fautif* from 1946 where he used his own sperm to produce a painting on black satin for sculptor Maria Martins, with whom he was apparently in love.
10. Salvio, *Anna Sexton*, 36.
11. Dickey, quoted in Salvio, op.cit., p. 36.
12. Anon., "The Richard Mutt Case," 5 (<http://sdrclib.uiowa.edu/dada/blindman/2/05.htm>).
13. Duchamp, "The Creative Act," 138.
14. In his psychoanalytic reading of *Fountain* David Hopkins stresses its "hermaphroditic connotations": "In [...] the urinal evokes at once the forms of Buddha and the Holy Virgin, the object (like Freud's Mut), clearly has hermaphroditic connotations. Simultaneously, in being disconnected from its utilitarian context and photographed in a rotated position, such that the hole at the base scurrilously evokes the Holy Mutter's vulva, Duchamp brilliantly succeeds in cutting off both the urinal's functional potential and the anatomical associations which would confirm its "masculinity", given the Buddha parallel. In effect, he "castrates" the object doubly, as both male and female, and thereby succinctly thematizes the psychic quandary around the issue of the penis' presence/absence...". Hopkins, "Men Before the Mirror," 306.
15. Jensen, *Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fancy*, 14.
16. Munkhammar, "Forord," sine pagina.
17. Freud, *Delusion and Dream*, 114.
18. Ibid., 149.
19. Mitchell, *What do pictures want*, 128.
20. Ibid., 127.
21. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 359.
22. Mitchell, *What do pictures want*, 125.
23. Elkins, *Our Beautiful, Dry, and Distant Texts*.
24. Winterson, *Art and Lies*, 65.
25. Gade, "6 billeder. Refleksioner over nogle uartige tegninger af Andrea Lind-Valdan," 13.
26. Ibid., 12.
27. Paz, *The Double Flame*, 190.
28. Barthes, op.cit., 214.
29. Ibid., 215.

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